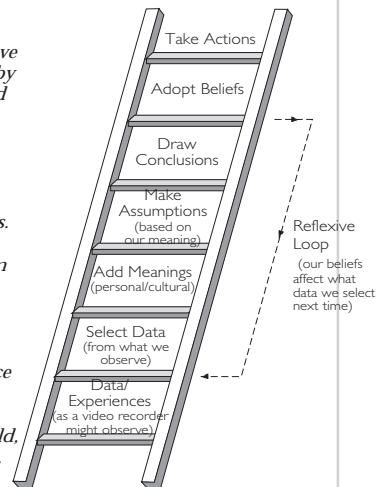


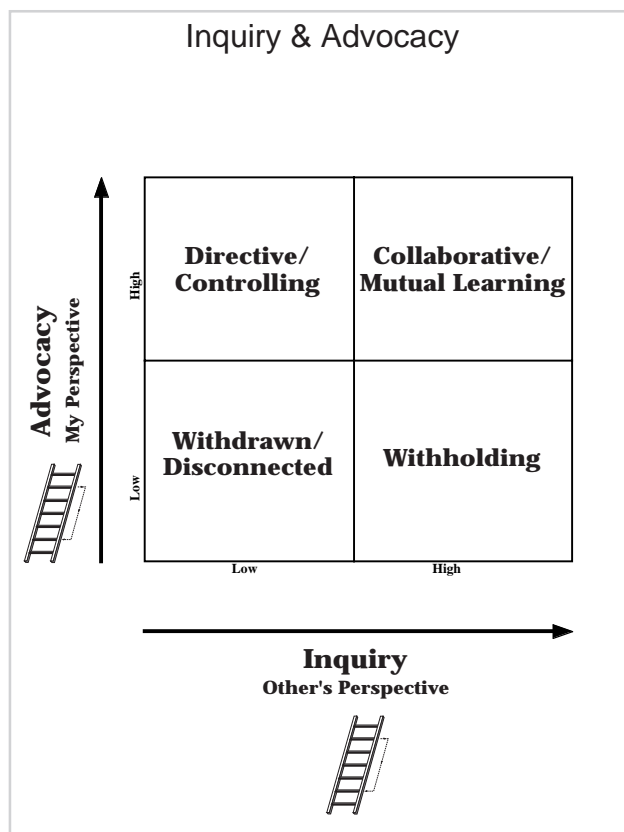
## Ladder of Inference\*

*Underlying our behavior is the Ladder of Inference, a model describing the flow of human information processing. Our capacity to work with others to make decisions and take effective action is significantly affected by the ways in which we select and make meaning of data. These choices, of which we are all too often unaware, can cause conflict in and damage to our work relationships, leading to unintended, undesirable results. We create these unintended consequences particularly when we act as if our perceptions are the truth without testing them with others.*

*Applying the Ladder of Inference enables us to make explicit the tacit assumptions and self-generating belief systems we hold, allowing for more open, honest, direct communication. This, in turn, leads to decisions and actions that are based on valid information and to which people are internally committed.*



\* Adapted from *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (page 243) by Art Kleiner, Charlotte Roberts, Richard Ron, Peter Senge and Bryan Smith.



## Guidelines for Productive Inquiry

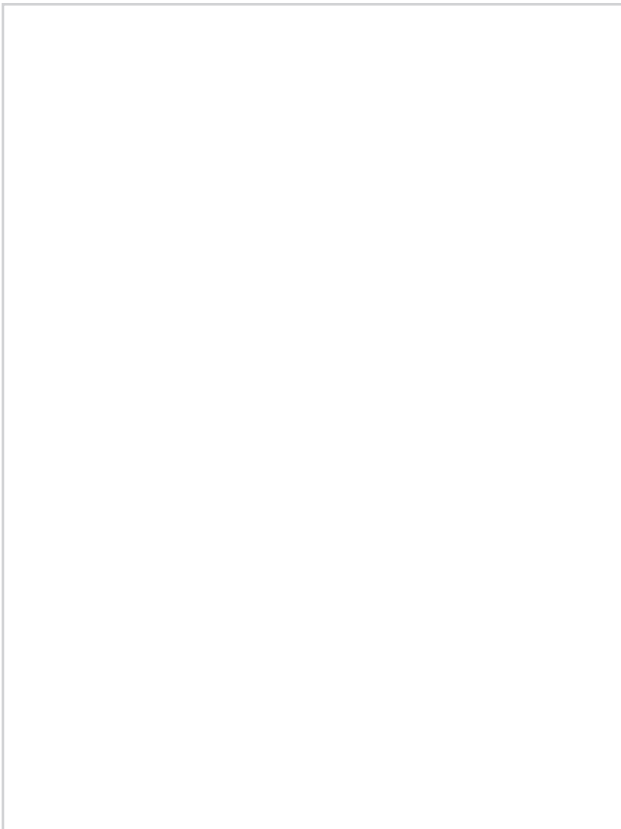
Guideline/ Technique	Intention	How To Do It	Example
<b>Listen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To hear, free from your own filters and assumptions, the other person's intended meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Momentarily set aside your own reactions, thoughts and feelings, and fill your mind with genuine curiosity about the other's thoughts and feelings.</li> </ul>	<i>If you're thinking, "He's crazy! That will never work," set that aside and replace it with, "Hold on! I may be missing something. Slow down and first just work hard to understand where he's coming from."</i>
<b>Ask for data and reasoning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To help the others make explicit their data and reasoning so they can test the validity or invalidity of their thinking</li> <li>To deepen both their and your understanding of their thoughts, feelings, and actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask basic questions using, "who," "what," "why," or "how."</li> <li>Ask what was said or done that led the other to his/her conclusions.</li> <li>Ask for the reasoning they used to get to the conclusions.</li> </ul>	<i>"What other concerns did you have about the review committee's comments?"</i> or <i>"What did Mary actually say or do that makes you think she's been manipulating the situation?"</i>
<b>Para-phrase</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To legitimize the other person</li> <li>To confirm or disconfirm what you think he or she is saying or feeling</li> <li>To make your perceptions visible and openly discussible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen and look for key phrases, body language, and feelings.</li> <li>Restate your understanding or perceptions using your own words.</li> </ul>	<i>"What you seem to be suggesting, Helen, is that the proposal will not be approved unless you take the time to find out Paul's concerns."</i> or <i>"Ralph, you seem to be feeling really pressured to commit to the deliverables before you can check out some major problems you see."</i>
<b>Check for Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build mutual understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check to see if your perceptions are accurate</li> </ul>	<i>"Is that accurate?"</i> or <i>"Is that what's really getting to you?"</i> or <i>"What am I missing?"</i>

## Guidelines for Productive Advocacy

Guideline/ Technique	Intention	How To Do It	Example
<b>State your view, data, &amp; reasoning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To make your own inferential process visible so that it can become openly discussible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State the specific, observable data and reasoning that led you to your conclusions.</li> </ul>	<i>"I know we're under a time pressure right now, but because this is the second project that has come up with a big time crunch at the end, I'd like to take an hour tomorrow to see if we can identify the key issues in order to prevent this from happening in the future."</i>
<b>State Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To help build understanding about the consequences of actions.</li> <li>To provide more data from which to build an informed decision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State the potential or actual consequences of the reasoning or action.</li> </ul>	<i>"My concern is that if we don't take the time while it is fresh in our minds, we'll lose the learning and keep repeating the same problems next month when we're really going to be under the gun."</i>
<b>Check for Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build common understanding so that you can ultimately take concerted action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask them to restate, in their own words, what you've said.</li> <li>Ask what questions they have for understanding.</li> </ul>	<i>"Am I making myself clear?"</i> or <i>"What questions do you have about my concern or what I'm suggesting?"</i>
<b>Invite Reactions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To seek disconfirming information.</li> <li>To test the validity of your thinking.</li> <li>To build mutual understanding and internal commitment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check to see where the other person agrees or disagrees with your perspective.</li> <li>Encourage the other person to point out any fallacies in your thinking.</li> <li>Inquire into the data and reasoning that leads them to disagree.</li> </ul>	<i>"What's your reaction? Does that seem reasonable, or what am I missing?"</i> or <i>"What is it about my thinking that you're having problems with?"</i> or <i>"Help me understand what leads you to disagree?"</i>

## Features of Productive and Counter-productive Conversations

PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS	CONVERSATIONS LEADING TO UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear messages</li> <li>• Direct</li> <li>• Open, explicit about <del>///</del>, reasoning</li> <li>• Test assumptions</li> <li>• Provide data <del>///</del></li> <li>• Productive inquiry guidelines<del>///</del> inquire into other(s)' ladder <del>///</del></li> <li>• Productive advocacy guide- lines—share your ladder and encourage other(s) to confront your reasoning <del>///</del></li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="text-align: center; margin-right: 10px;">             H  L  INQUIRY         </div> <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td></td><td>I &amp; A</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <div style="text-align: center; margin-left: 10px;">             L  H         </div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>ADVOCACY</i></li> <li>• Consistency between espoused values and values governing actions</li> <li>• Be willing and proactive about stating your intentions all along the way</li> </ul>		I & A			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed messages</li> <li>• Indirect</li> <li>• Withheld <del>///</del>, reasoning</li> <li>• Untested assumptions</li> <li>• Do not provide data</li> <li>• Do not inquire into other(s)' <del>///</del> ladder</li> <li>• Inquiry without advocacy</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="text-align: center; margin-right: 10px;">             H  L  ADVOCACY         </div> <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>A WITHOUT I</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>WITH- DRAWN</td><td>I WITHOUT A</td></tr> </table> <div style="text-align: center; margin-left: 10px;">             L  H  INQUIRY         </div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistency between espoused values and values-in-action</li> </ul>	A WITHOUT I		WITH- DRAWN	I WITHOUT A
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